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25 September 1968

## MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT: Telephone Conversation with Dr. Wernher von Braun,  
Director, Marshall Space Flight Center

State Dept. review completed

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1. Dr. von Braun called me via secure phone specifically to get brought up-to-date on the details of the Zond 5 flight. He explained that he had a strong interest in this event because of his position in the U.S. manned space flight program. He added that he was soon to leave for New York for an interview by the CBS radio network and that he suspected he would be questioned on the Zond 5 flight. I briefed him orally on the Zond 5 flight, and in particular on the possible configuration of the spacecraft. Since Dr. von Braun is SI-TK cleared I divulged to him a considerable amount of information we have from these sources.

2. Dr. von Braun then asked me what he could say regarding the Zond 5 flight that was unclassified. I told him that it would be perfectly proper to point to the recovery of an object returning from the moon as a significant milestone in the path to a manned lunar landing, but I advised him to avoid suggesting that the Zond 5 booster could support a lunar landing or even a manned lunar orbiter, because it does not actually have the payload capability. I added that I thought it would be perfectly proper for him to make a personal judgment that this flight might well be followed up by another unmanned circumlunar flight and that if it was successful the Russians might attempt a manned circumlunar mission either late this year or sometime next year.

3. I also pointed out to him that the facts of the announced launch time and the announced recovery time and recovery location could be used to justify a tie-in of the Zond 5 mission to an ultimate manned mission. This is because if the long-term objective of the Soviets had only been to fly unmanned circumlunar shots, they could have shaped the trajectory so as to come back to the U.S.S.R. ballistically

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with very high "g" loads on reentry. Landing the vehicle south of the Equator was the only way a vehicle launched from the U.S.S.R. on a circumlunar free-return trajectory could have returned to earth ballistically without encountering "g" loads too high for human beings to tolerate. The foregoing does not use any classified information but merely derives from a knowledge of celestial mechanics together with the particulars on the flight given out by the Soviets. 25X1

4. Von Braun then asked if he could refer in any way to the large booster now erected at area "J". I told him that this information was still highly classified. However, I did say that if he chose to quote statements by Mr. Webb on this subject, I doubted whether any reprisals would be taken by the intelligence community.

DAVID S. BRANDWEIN  
Director

Foreign Missile and Space Analysis Center

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